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### **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

**(Economic Reform, Private Sector Development, Trade and Agriculture)**

#### **Sardine firm takes over Tawi-Tawi multi-species hatchery**

**(Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer news Online – 5/6/08)**

ZAMBOANGA CITY, Philippines -- Tawi-Tawi has leased its multi-species hatchery to sardine industry leader Mega Fishing Corporation (MFC), under an agreement signed here by Governor Sadikul Sahali and MFC president William Lim.

The hatchery, which will produce up to 400,000 fingerlings of grouper and 1.6 to 3.4 million abalone spats annually, will help to ensure a steady and sustainable supply of high-value marine species for grow-out by fish farmers selling to Asian markets.

The hatchery-bred young will be purchased by approximately 1,000 growers in Tawi-Tawi and nearby areas, including former combatants of the Moro National Liberation Front who have been assisted by USAID's Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program to become mariculture farmers.

The hatchery is expected to help prevent the depletion of various commercial marine species in the Sulu archipelago, as local growers will no longer have to rely on catching young fish in the wild for grow-out, in order to meet market demand.

Zamboanga-based MFC is a deep-sea purse seine fishing company which ships its canned fish products to 22 countries. It reported a 50-percent increase in its volume of exports in 2007.

The establishment of the multi-species hatchery, which was turned over by the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to the provincial government last month, was assisted by the Southeast Asian Fisheries

Development Center, Philippine Fisheries Development Authority, and the GEM Program, which is implemented with the oversight of the Mindanao Economic Development Council.